

*S. Rep. 204
J. W. Fulbright*

COPY

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of September 27, 1963 requesting comment by the Department of State on Senate Resolution 204 as published in the Congressional Record of September 26. The Resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that the Soviet Government's persecution of persons because of their religion be condemned, that the Soviet Government cease executing persons for alleged economic offenses, and permit the free exercise of religion and cultural pursuits by Jews and all other persons living in the Soviet Union.

The Department has consistently stressed our Government's belief that the long term anti-religious campaign in the Soviet Union has grown in intensity over the past several years. All religions, including the Jewish religion, are being subjected to increasing restrictions, forms of interference, and negative social pressures.

The Department cannot stress too strongly its disapproval of the pressures which are brought to bear against various religious and minority groups in the Soviet Union. As the Department has frequently pointed out, in the case of the Jews these pressures prevent the normal maintenance and development of Jewish religious and cultural life.

The Department can well appreciate the humanitarian and religious motives which have inspired the drafters of the proposed Senate Resolution 204, intended to relieve the plight of the Jews and other religious people in the Soviet Union. These unfortunate people continue to suffer for their religious convictions as the result of repressive actions initiated by the Soviet Government since its accession of power following World War I. If the Department believed of achieving its purpose, it would urge the Resolution's submission for consideration by the Senate. It is the Department's considered opinion that under present circumstances this unfortunately would not be the case.

The Department

The Honorable
J. W. Fulbright,
Chairman of the Committee
of Foreign Relations,
United States Senate.

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The Department seriously doubts that Soviet leadership would be influenced favorably by the Senate's adoption of the Resolution. In the past, Soviet officials have reacted most unfavorably to outside criticism, particularly that by foreign government organs or official representatives, on matters which the Soviet Government considers to be within the sole purview of Soviet internal interests.

Given the uncertainty of the present situation in the Soviet Union, any such intervention as that proposed by Senate Resolution 204 might be seized upon by Mr. Khrushchev to show that he is in fact able to act independently and might lead him to take the very action against the Jewish people of the Soviet Union which we are trying to prevent. The Resolution might therefore redound seriously to the detriment of Soviet Jews and other religious people of the Soviet Union.

Specifically, the first clause in the second paragraph of the Resolution to the effect that "the Government of the Soviet Union is persecuting Jewish citizens by singling them out for extreme punishment for alleged economic offenses," would be considered by the Soviet Government and the Soviet people as an effort of the American Congress to interfere with the legal processes of the Soviet Union.

The Department continues to believe that formal United States Government representations to the Soviet Government would not be in the best interests of Soviet Jews and that these representations could in fact antagonize the Soviet Government to the detriment of Soviet Jews. In the past, the Soviet Government has often accused Soviet Jews of susceptibility to subversive foreign influences and of being agents of foreign states, most particularly of the United States and Israel. It hardly would be to the interest of Soviet Jews for the United States to take actions which would lend substance of credence to this charge against Soviet Jewry. Formal actions by the United States Government or its official representatives could have this unfortunate result and also lose in effectiveness because of the tendency of public opinion in many areas to dismiss United States moves involving the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as motivated primarily by cold war considerations.

The Department believes that to bring about a change in Soviet policies affecting the situation of Soviet Jews lies in appeals by private organizations and individuals to the Soviet authorities. Such appeals may heighten Soviet sensitivity on this subject and may encourage a decrease in Soviet activity against these unfortunate people.

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Since the fate of Soviet Jewry is of concern to the world community, serious thought might be given to a united appeal of private organizations representing world-wide Jewry and, if possible, other religious groups.

In conclusion, the Department believes that a Resolution such as Senate Resolution 204 would not serve a useful purpose and conceivably can worsen the situation of the persons whom it seeks to assist.

The Bureau of the Budget advises that from the standpoint of the administration's program there is no objection to the submission of this report.

Sincerely yours,

Frederick G. Dutton
Assistant Secretary

EUR:SOV:VHJames:cw 10-31-63

EUR - Mr. Davis
SOV - Mr. Guthrie

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NO. 38

ROUTE SLIP

(Fold Here)

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BUREAU OF THE BUDGET**

DATE 3/17/64

TO: Mr. Donald Schaut

FROM: Joe C. Ray

REMARKS:

In line with your request, a copy of the State Dept.'s proposed report on S.Res. 204 is attached for your information.

As you probably know, we must act upon reports on this resolution by Friday of this week.